



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **Flu activity increases in McLean County** *Now is the time to vaccinate against seasonal influenza*

BLOOMINGTON— Hospitals and schools in McLean County report an increase in influenza-like illnesses, so the McLean County Health Department reminds citizens that the best protection from influenza is the seasonal flu shot.

Influenza, commonly known as the flu, is a serious and highly contagious viral infection that affects the respiratory system. Some people who get the flu have relatively mild illness, while other cases are more severe. A typical flu season runs from October through April, with illnesses peaking in January. Symptoms of the flu include fever of 100.4 or above, severe chills and body aches, fatigue, mild sniffles, dry cough, sore throat, and severe chest discomfort.

“As we enter the holiday season, it’s important to get this year’s flu shot to prevent the spread of illness,” McLean County Health Department (MCHD) Director Walt Howe said. “The body’s immunity provided from last year’s vaccine has declined, and different strains of flu are circulating this year compared to last year. Your body builds immunity from the strains in this year’s vaccine just few weeks after receiving it, so now is the time to protect yourself from the flu.”

The Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) anticipate a much more active flu season than in the past two years. Local flu statics are not available from the health department, because only influenza cases in hospital intensive care units are reported; however, local hospitals and schools are expressing an increase in flu-like symptoms over the past two weeks throughout the community.

The death of a 54-year-old woman in November was the first influenza-related death this season in McLean County. Laboratory results confirmed the influenza link weeks after the woman’s death. Through investigation, it was identified that she did not receive the seasonal flu vaccine.

CDC recommends everyone over the age of 6 months receive the seasonal flu shot. Those at risk for complications from the flu include children younger than 2 years, all adults 65 years and older, and people with medical conditions like asthma, diabetes, heart conditions or pregnancy. According to the CDC, this year’s flu vaccine is a great match to circulating viruses, and includes three different influenza strains: H1N1, H3N2, and B/Wisconsin viruses.

If you are experiencing flu-like symptoms, stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone without the use of

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fever-reducing medicine. People should contact their local health care provider for antiviral medication.

To reduce the spread of flu, it is also important to practice the 3 Cs of illness prevention:

- Clean—properly wash your hands frequently
- Cover—cover your cough and sneeze
- Contain—contain your germs by staying home if you are sick

The health department has a limited supply of adult seasonal flu vaccine, which is provided to eligible adults. MCHD also provides seasonal flu vaccine for VFC eligible children ages 6 months to 18 years. Eligible families must be uninsured, underinsured, or on Medicaid and residents of McLean County. To schedule an appointment, please call (309) 888-5455.

Visit <http://health.mcleancountyil.gov/flu> to access an application to find local pharmacies that provide flu vaccines or ask your primary health care provider.

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